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538 momentous events would accomplish literary
feats of equal magnitude. On the contrary, one
finds, with only rare exceptions, "formula"
stories which have all the correct political
ingredients demanded of them but which lack
originality and any attempt at characterization.
One story of land reform reads much like
another, the only differences being the names
given the heroes and some few idiosyncracies
of the writers in the use of colloquial expressions
and political jargon. Necessary adherence to
a prescribed political formula has blighted
creativity.

C. Literary Criticism

Fear of originality in literature is the
result of the influence of officially organized
and directed literary criticism, which uses
Communist literary theories to coerce. The
disparity in regard for critical and creative
writing has stunted the young Communist
literature and precluded a normal growth.

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536 Outstanding instances of the enervating
effect of Communist criticism are the reviews
of the play "The Song of the Red Flag" and
the story "Old Worker Ku Fu-shan." The play,
concerning shock-teams in a production drive,
was initially praised by the Communists them-
selves; later, it was criticized because "it
did not give a strong portrayal of the trade union
and the Party." According to the critics, the

814 author should have used the play to strengthen
538 the prestige of the trade union among the worker-
536 audiences and to emphasize the "heroic"
qualities of the leading protagonist, a Communist
cadre. The portrayal of the Party cadre P'eng
Kang in the play was deemed incorrect, "for
the Party's leadership is invariably collective,
but in the play, P'eng seems to be quite alone."
The play was thus rated "of low educational
value." The author of "Old Worker Ku Fu-shan"
was reprimanded because he "not only distorts
the image of a model Party member but also
completely ignores the function of Party training
and leadership."

814 The classic example of Communist literary
546 and artistic criticism involves the 1951
Shanghai-produced film, "Wu Hsün Chuan,"
based on the life of a famous nineteenth century
advocate of free education who lived in Shantung
Province. Wu Hsün was born into a poor
family and was thus deprived of formal education.
In order to help children to attend school, he
dedicated himself to hard work and frugal living;
and by shrewd investment of his savings, he
succeeded in accumulating funds for the education
of the poor. Wu Hsün's contribution to Chinese
education was never questioned until the Com-
munist critics attacked the film. Wu's efforts,
according to the Communist critics, only
strengthened the feudal order and arrested the
forces of progress; rather than serving as an
"accomplice" of the Manchu ruling order, the

538 Some of the older folk songs are now being
rearranged so that the old forms accomodate the
533 new ideology. The most notable example is
Yüan Chang-ching's rearrangement of "The
Water of the Chang River." In East China
nothing of comparable quality is known to
have been composed.

F. Drama

536 Stage plays in China can be roughly divided
into four kinds: (1) folk plays native to small
● dialectal districts, (2) ching-hsi or p'i-huang
(Peking opera), which is appreciated in all
parts of China proper, but particularly in
Peking, Tientsin, and Shanghai, and in big
cities of other regions, (3) the new opera,
a genre created by the Chinese Communists,
and (4) the modern play. These, together with
motion pictures, are now utilized by the Com-
munists to disseminate ideological and political
messages.

1. The folk plays. Just as there are many
dialectal differences in East China, so the
folk plays are both numerous and various. The
following are the most representative.

"Shantung pang-tzu" is one of the many
variations of the North China pang-tzu. The

- 536 musical rhythms of these plays are marked by the beat of a foot-long wooden stick, which in North China is called pang-tzu. P'ing-chü, which is also called peng-peng-hsi, is native to T'ang-shan and Juan hsien in Hopei. They are usually love stories both unsophisticated and vulgar. The popularity of pang-tzu and p'ing-chü in Shantung indicates that traditionally Shantung is more closely related to North China than to the southern provinces.

The most popular folk play in East China is Yüeh-chü. Compared with other folk plays, Yüeh-chü is decidedly richer in content and more integrated in form, having a large professional group which is composed exclusively of young girls, and a leisure class, mostly of middle-class housewives, dedicated to its appreciation. The most celebrated Yüeh-chü actress in recent years is Yüan Hsüeh-fen. As the result of her ideological "progressiveness," plays incorporating themes approved by the Communists have been introduced in Yüeh-chü.

2. Ching-hsi. A composite of many regional plays, ching-hsi is popular in all parts of China. The best actors and actresses of ching-hsi, however, have been those associated with the Peking theaters. Shanghai, because of its wealth, has also been able to invite the best actors and actresses to its theaters. The musical accompaniment is carried by the

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536 hu-ch'in, a string instrument, assisted by other
534 strings and by wood-winds. Percussion is
used to accentuate rhythms of body movements
and to dramatize heightened movements.

536 At its present state, ching-hsi is a highly
polished form of art. It no longer depends
for audience appeal on plotting but rather on
a display of skill by the actors. It emphasizes
costuming rather than scenery. The verses
sung serve to express the feelings of the chief
characters. Actors may play the female roles
and actresses may play the male roles. The
spoken dialogue and the spoken platter, consist-
ing of clichés in colloquial language, help the
movement of the play, make the literary
language of the sung verses more intelligible
to the audience, and aid in the variation of
rhythm. However, most of the spectators
know the play, have memorized the verses,
and can sing some of them. They came to the
theatre to watch and enjoy the art of a stylized
performance.

In comparison with the folk plays, the
ching-hsi is a much more integrated art. There-
fore, it is more difficult to introduce innovations
in the ching-hsi without damaging its accepted
form; in contrast, the folk plays may easily
incorporate new elements. This fact accounts
for the Communists' effort to revamp the folk
plays and to bring them up to the same level
of popular and artistic recognition as the ching-
hsi. However, in the Communists' effort to

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536 reinterpret history, the ching-hsi is at present rendering unique service. The Communists have not only revised many of the old scripts to conform to their ideology, but have also encouraged the writing of new scripts. In this attempt, well-known actors like Mei Lan-fang and Ch'eng Yen-ch'iu are asked to lend a helping hand.

Playwrights in Communist China are now told to study ching-hsi, because this form can be used to dramatize personalities. In the Communists' effort to glorify the image of the "new heroes," this art is considered extremely important.

3. The new opera. The new opera in China is modeled after the operatic forms of the West but the content deals with revolutionary themes. The first experiment in this form was The White-haired Girl (1944), a collective creation of the writers and artists of the Lu Hsiin Institute of Literature and Art. In the arias sung by the heroine, the musical pattern of the Hopei pang-tzu is borrowed to convey her changing moods. This is considered a very successful adaptation by the Communists. But the melodies of the other sung parts, which appear to be of yang-ko origin, are close to folk songs and lack dramatic effect. The White-haired Girl has been characterized as "drama-plus-song," a term which indicates that the operatic form is not well enough developed to enable the music to carry the themes.

- 536 This inadequacy was remedied in the second major opera commissioned by the Communists. The opera Liu Hu-lan gives the heroine Liu Hu-lan opportunities "to delineate her heroic personality" in longer and more frequent arias. The musical pattern of the Shansi pang-tzu is used in the arias, and the whole opera has a Shansi color.

The composers were alarmed when they discovered that the melodies which describe the corrupt life of the landlord in the opera The White-haired Girl were hummed by the audience rather than the arias of the heroine and the chorus of the 8th Route Army. They resolved not to give the "negative" personality strong musicalization. As a result, the opera Liu Hu-lan incorporates queer and disjointed melodies for the villainous roles, and the villains are shallow caricatures. Thus, for ideological reasons, the Communists now limit "true music" to the expression of "lofty passions" for the "right cause."

The new operas are intended for national consumption irrespective of regional differences, although local airs are incorporated into the scores according to the locality of the stories. Both The White-haired Girl and Liu Hu-lan are based on incidents which occurred in North China, although they have been transformed

- 536 by grossly "dramatic" exaggeration. They are performed by opera troupes all over China, and their influence is national. Other well-known operas include the Long March, in which Mao Tse-tung is impersonated for the first time.

4. Modern play (hua-chü). The modern play, like the motion picture, has no regional character. Any acceptable play will be staged in all parts of China, and kuo-yü (the national language) is used rather than the various dialects. Ch'en Ch'i-t'ung's Thousands of Rivers and Mountains proves that the Communist Long March in the thirties is always "correct" material for dramatization. The Song of the Red Flags, concerned with production drives in a textile factory in North China, was the collective creation of three playwrights, written after they had agreed on the ideological significance of this type of play and had sketched out the plot under the "guidance" of Chou Yang, the Vice minister of Cultural Affairs. The Song of the Red Flags was performed in Peking, Shanghai, Nanking, Chungking, Lan-chow and other bit cities. In Shanghai alone, it had 159 performances, and some 125,000 people attended it. 20

20. People's Pictorial [Jen-min Hua-pao], Peking, July 1950.

536 If we take into account the fact that theater-going is now an organized activity of the various mass organizations such as the labor unions, the Women's Federation, the New Democratic Youth Corps, the Young Pioneers, and the study circles, the length of the run and the size of the audience do not accurately reflect the enthusiasm of the people but rather the effectiveness of the Communist organization for mass participation in the field of recreation.

Russian plays have been staged in Shanghai with considerable fanfare. However, a most spectacular event was the recent production of a Polish play, translated into Chinese, called The Rosenbergs, depicting "the suffering of innocent people in the capitalist, war-mongering country, i. e., the U.S.A."

546 5. Motion pictures. Shanghai and Mukden are now the centers of China's motion-picture industry. The White-haired Girl, based on the same version as the opera, won the first prize among the thirty-eight entries at the Communist International Motion-Picture Festival in Czechoslovakia in 1951. The Concentration Camp at Shang-yao, which was made in 1951, describes the life of the "patriotic people" in the Kuomintang concentration camp, and, according to the Communist reviewers, successfully demonstrates the "collective heroism" of the Communists under duress. When the rural production drive was about to begin in 1954, the movie Good Harvest was

546 timed to be shown to the peasants during the festivities of the lunar New Year, in order to emphasize the importance of increasing the output of the land. The People on the Grassland is a movie about the Mongols in Inner Mongolia. Sound tracks in the Mongol and Uigur languages have been made so that this picture may be circulated among those ethnic minorities.

G. Shou-shu

•536 Popular entertainment in East China, especially in places like Shanghai, Soochow, and Nanking, includes story-telling with or without singing parts and musical accompaniment known as shuo-shu. Stories with singing parts and musical accompaniment are called ta-shu, and those without singing parts are called hsiao-shu. Since they are not meant for staging, adaptable to extemporizations and the singer or narrator is free to add his own interpretation of the story. Most of the singers and narrators obtain their stories and verses from favorite sources like the Shui-hu Chuan (The Water Margins or All Men Are Brothers), The Dream of the Red Chamber, The Romance of the Three Kingdoms, and the West Chamber.

At first, the Communists tried to "educate" and "reform" the singer and narrators so that they could sing or narrate more "worthy" stories. Now that the Communists themselves have learned to appreciate the value of traditional literature, they seek new interpretations of the old fiction.

• 536 It should be mentioned that the Communists have elevated the social position of actors and actresses from that of "entertainer" to that of "artist." Actors and actresses have their own organizations in the capital and are invited to take part "under the leadership of the Party" in the deliberation of new policies pertaining to their profession.

III. ARTISTIC EXPRESSION

A. Painting and the Plastic Arts

532 Painting and the plastic arts are largely utilitarian in China today. The utilitarian spirit puts them in the realm of either propaganda or craftsmanship. As propaganda, they have become extremely derivative and stereotyped; as craftsmanship, they utilize local characteristics and traditional skills and sometimes are unrestrainedly florid and pretentious. Chinese brush paintings, woodcuts, oil paintings, pencil sketches, water colors, sculpture, ceramic figures, wood-carvings, cartoons, and chalk drawings are entries in most of the art exhibitions. Among these categories, ceramic figures and wood-carvings represent local craftsmanship and are little influenced by Communist ideology. Other art forms have followed Communist policies and adopted Communist slogans as themes. Woodcuts, sculptures, and water colors seem to have been more easily adapted to the new themes than oil paintings and the traditional Chinese brush

IV. STAGE AND SCREEN

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• 536 The stage and screen are effective media for bringing messages to the illiterate and semi-literate. The Communists realize this and have been fully exploiting the possibilities of both forms of mass communication. A summary of the developments in this region follows:

A. Stage

1. Control. The key directive in the Communist policy for development of the stage as a medium of mass communication is the consolidation and reform of the available facilities and personnel before expansion is begun. This approach was adopted by officials concerned with dramatics in East China immediately upon the establishment of new local governments in 1949. The system of control includes both professional and amateur dramatic groups. Professional actors, playwrights, and stage workers have their respective associations led by a provincial federation of such associations. In larger cities, artists also have their organizations belonging to the same pyramid. Amateur dramatic groups are encouraged and aided by these associations. Before abolishment of the Greater Regional governments, the provincial federation received orders from regional authorities. Now the provincial federations work hand in hand with provincial governments and Communist Party branches, receiving direction from the Cultural and Information administrations under the State Council in Peking. The Drama Reform Bureau

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536 under the Cultural Administration is directly and exclusively responsible for interpreting broad policies laid down by the Communist Party. In East China, Ch'en Wang-tao, as chief of the Cultural Bureau for this region, remained the highest authority in charge of development of drama until June 1954 when regional agencies were abolished. Ch'en Wang-tao, a noted leftist writer in East China, has had a long literary career.

The control system in this region was organized rapidly; by April 1950, most of the provincial federations had had at least one conference of delegates from local associations.⁴⁵

2. Development. The development of the new-type stage plays in this region dates from the May 4th Movement of 1919. New dramatic troupes have gone a long way in expanding their activities to reach throughout the countryside. In 1950, over 300 plays new and old scripts revised, had successful runs in Shanghai. Most of these plays were widely circulated in this region. In the spring of the same year, a dramatic contest was held. Over ninety theaters and 4,000 actors participated in the contest; ninety-two plays were judged successful by popular acclaim. Professional actors and actresses were registered for indoctrination classes. In July 1950 the second class in Shanghai graduated over 1,000 trainees from all parts of East China. Together with the training program in Nanking, about 3,000 actors and actresses had received political indoctrination by the middle of 1950.⁴⁶ At the same time, 2,572

45. Compendium of Government Reports, p. 648.

46. Ibid., pp. 563, 611.

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208 village dramatic troupes were performing in
 ● 536 Shantung Province.

Although recent statistics on the development of the stage in East China are not available, national figures found in the Communist press indicate that many new plays have been published and staged and the number of trained professionals has been on the increase. Many of the new plays were written by local amateurs among whom were workers and students. Being adaptations of stories of local origin, most of the plays have a distinct local flavor; but their central themes show very little variation: they praise the new regime and glorify those who support government policy.

The conversion of old operas and stories, substituting Communist ideas for traditional ideas of filial piety and loyalty to friends is a more delicate job. One of these pieces is Liang Shan-po yü Chu Ying-tai, a one-act opera with thirteen scenes. The story originated in Chekiang Province many years ago and has been adapted as an opera. The East China Drama Academy revised it as a modern Chinese opera in August 1951.⁴⁷ Since then the script has been printed in many national literary magazines and staged in various parts of China, and it was made into a motion picture in 1953. Although technical adjustments have been made, the plot

47, Hua-tung Ti-fang Hsi-chü Ts'ung-k'an [East China Drama], No. 1, Shanghai, Hsin-wen i ch'u-pan-she, 1954, p. 3.

208 and the theme remain unaltered. The original
336 story tells of the experience of a girl who, failing to marry the man she loves, prefers death to marrying the man chosen for her by her parents. This is one of the few revised pieces that have survived waves of criticism and attacks by orthodox Communist cultural workers. Many others did not fare so well. Playwrights in East China have been ordered to revise old operas and stories. The Communists realize that since the old stories have been accepted and symbolize certain concepts in the minds of the audience, the job of remolding them without damaging their effectiveness and classic content is a difficult one.

Song and dance are used extensively both on and off stage. Their versatility as media of information and propaganda has long been recognized by the Communists. As early as 1950, the Communist-organized Association of Musicians in Shanghai had already turned out 1,405 new songs, of which 155 received official blessing and were given wide circulation.⁴⁸ Musical and dance numbers arranged to depict a political theme are frequently presented at the cultural centers and by propaganda teams traveling in the countryside. (For more discussion on song and dance, see the chapter on Literature and Artistic Expressions in this handbook.)

3. Recent Trends. Chairman Shu T'ung of the Cultural and Educational Commissions of East China at a conference in Peking in January 1953 was told to pay closer attention to the choice of plays and actors. He was to devise a system for a rigid screening of the players and closer supervision of the plays. Now the Regional Government

48. Compendium of Gov't Reports, p. 563.

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536 is no longer in existence. but this official policy
will be expected of responsible officials at the
provincial level.

B. Motion Pictures

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208 1. Control. The Communist consolidation
of control of the motion picture industry and its
activities followed a pattern of similar design
to that of the control of the stage. The seizure
of existing facilities and the indoctrination of
personnel preceded a planned expansion. Motion
picture production in this region is but a part
of the nationally centralized undertaking. At
this writing, there seems to be no independent
film-production company in East China to
complicate the problem of control. The regional,
or -- after June 1954 -- provincial Cultural and
Educational Commission is responsible for exe-
cuting Peking's orders on control of the movie
industry and is subject to supervision by Com-
munist Party propaganda agencies at appropriate
levels. To handle administrative details, there
are branches of the Motion Picture Association
of China in all provinces and major municipalities.
The association co-ordinates film production and
distribution, again under the supervision of the
government control system. Movie actors and
workers are organized and are supervised by the
Motion Picture Association of China. It would
be a fine network of co-ordination for business
promotion, if the industry were independent.
But as it is in East China, the system amounts
to a complicated machine in which every part
of the movie industry is hamstrung by govern-
ment orders and none can function individually.